

Feather, Shadow,
Worm, Leaf

by
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Part I.

The countries of fire

SACRIFICE

They will eat of my flesh in some
perversion of communion just as my brother
they ate before. They think I am weak

but have strength to spare,
and they are wrong to think I'll give
them what they seek. Eat and be satisfied here.

I've poisoned myself and poisoned you too,
you who have hated me
die with me. I die without fear.

MY LIPS TO YOUR LIPS ARE CRUCIFIED

My lips to your lips are crucified, the heart of my soul
made silent in your embrace.

The world contracts until only our breathing is left to us,
and then nothing remains,
until the moment is broken and our lips part, and then my
heart again to me speaks
and we take our separate ways.

THE BLOSSOMS OF ZIDAR

It was the blossoms of Zidar
which gave to us the gift of life. My wife has
grown quite pregnant from
that sacred plant

and I know I am not the father
of her daughter. My flesh cannot give infants the
eyes of summer days.

YUNA

Yuna the moth-handmaiden,
weaver of stone or thread

what does she not recall of them,
and whatever they almost just

recall becomes her again as
all the world of vines and thorns

must grow until her grief is shown
as anything except a rose.

REGARDING US

Regarding us
with a cool
cunning the
serpent stops

and stares as I
regard the
serpentine and
imagine her
as Medusa with
her sighing hair,
sighing as a
woman might whose
beauty is unaware.

THE RED ROOM

In that room tinged with crimson, I laid my
head on silken pillows soft as moth-wove wings, while
the room began its slow consumption,
curling walls as petaled mouths
along my body and my mind,
till both were spent in death.

Every night and nights long after the
death of all creation's flesh

I shall linger in that room,
lush and decadent as some Byzantine feast,
tinged with a fire like a pagan crypt as I lay my head
on silken pillows and pray
to God so desperately for sleep.

THE EALIM ISLES

We are drunk on the gersyhn root
and shadow wine in a country of black vine fruit,
in a land of tobacco salt and blind-seared cats hunting
the night with eyes behind their eyes.

Cohric, at Praxia three hundred
passed into a shadow-burning night and closed
their eyes to all the steeping sorrows of their
ambered light; I will not die like them

upon some godless shore
where god-disease has rotted their very souls.
Let me drunken lay

upon the villas of the Ealim Isles and
regret not if I die.

THE EMPIRE OF BORU

Here is a land to rest one's head upon,
this land of thirty rivers, this country
of the green gold Buddha. I have come upon
the pagoda city of Cen-Dau,
and have stopped to gaze
upon the jade sunflower, her flesh as gold
green as the Buddha, her eyes
as silver as our sleep. And everywhere the
grass rises sacred from the ground,
and everywhere the blue milk rose
has made her dark abode. Boru of the southern
isles are blessed beyond God's measure,
this land framed by blue water,
this land of thirty rivers.

TSOHATZIS

In Boru, where the jade sun
has reclined her head
against lace pillows,
there is Tsohatzis, the god of the
dwindling light. And he is
worshipped in the country of
the jade sun
and from every high
place is heralded. Oh how
can the gods be praised when
they are but men of an older
shape who linger
in places like Boru,
where the jade sunflower rests
her head, and gods are whispered
of, in dread?

THE SHADOW MAKER

I stopped and whittled at the shadows,
turning obsidian on my wheel, moulding it into
another shape.

And when I had finished
the shadows looked up at me with an ancient eye,
and laid their curse upon me,

until I was a shadow, moulded by another
man, as I laid my curse upon him, that he too
might bleed with night's blood,
that he too might taste night's ochre.

DRANGTHUS

In Chadioch where the five rivers mingle
I was given voice and knew my hands were flesh.

I was a man in that country of rivers and jungles,
in that iron city where women wore a purple dye
about their eyes.

And in that place, I was Drangthus, given
form and given voice and given all the sins and sorrows
and blood and grief and laughter of man's race.

Before I was Drangthus I know not who I was,
or why the winter witch called down a curse upon me.

SERHOD

The falcon through the heartache of her own
wide eye shall stab her beak against her throat,
while Serhod watches with
neither joy nor fear, as predator
to prey is made, as enemy to enemy is given
but that final price, that final victory against
the being of one's self.
And thus shall Serhod expire and die
in the sorrows of his own wide eye.

THE PRAK BLACK-JEWEL CLAWED

The Prak black jewel-clawed give their worship
to that mother of all sin, as the night is hooded
by a cobra's all-seeing eye, blood-tarnished
and blood shone,
 while the Prak gold-adorned
and serpent-blind climb into the hooded ruby seas,
claws jewel-soaked, eyes
 jewel-shrouded in that crimson, dark-blooded
surf which hangs between the bone-crippled ground
 and the shadow-crippled stars
like some unnatural sky,
 each sun glimmering as a bloodied
tear in that cobra's hooded eye.

IN MORLEM

In Morlem shadows lick the hands of man
as sparrows hang upon the grass, their wings
the air has raped and torn
 as bridal vows from virgin brides.

The raven of the moon is past
as shadows wander timidly along
the edges of the night,
 the sparrows left to hang and die
upon the curtains of the sky,
like suns whose fire has long expired
 or dreams too old to die.

IN IR ELGIA

I walked in Ir Elgia, the last city of man,
and found no tears of joy stained our souls
or eyes.

I left Ir Elgia, the last city of man
bitterly, for all the men were shadows
there and all the women shades.

DREAU-MORDA

And in that world milked of glory,
bled of pain, I had another name, another face,
and Dreau-Morda to my breast I held,
my daughter and my darkest love,
bled of passion, milked of hate,
until the fires like lapping dogs had licked the flesh
from off our bones in that tower of a thousand suns,
as all creation looked on and wept,
that such as we had lived.

ERYDIUS

It was the poet Erydius
who wrote the Book of Thel
in which a woman
descending down
went to seek
her lover and take him up,
hold him for a time, but couldn't
reach his soul, overstepped
her goal,
lost him not to hell but heaven.

THE CRIMSON FORESTS OF REMALIAH

Where the Summer's song is ended and the
Winter's Tears are dead, where Hafgan's sons
are murdered
on a blade-bent wind,
into the maelstrom only Remaliah
shall prevail while seasons clash and perish
in the gardens of her sins.

Hafgan and Arawn, the oldest
of her guests take their place
in the cathedral forests laden with crimson,
and there Remaliah, the eldest daughter of Fate
and Wisdom shall throw up her starved
hands in triumph and plunge
the worlds of bronze and shade into a final
resting place, before the graves
of a season's war laid too long amongst
the worlds of God. Then shall she rest.

IN HELLVEYLLYL

In Hellvelyl danced the gods by the darkening
river's tide upon some isle lost in memories
profaned, and turning our faces there
watching the purple shadows cling to the faces
of those gods I swore I too stood upon
the river's tide, and made me dance with theirs,
and then faded far away.

VOYAGE OF THE WHITE UNICORN

If everything has a spirit then a ship must also
have a soul, and the *White Unicorn*, the ship I
knew, when it crashed past blue water's skin
must have died like all the men on board her.

My daughter has eyes like blue water's skin,
my daughter sings songs she could not know.
My daughter knows the tide better than the
Keeper of the Tide, my daughter speaks
of a unicorn as if it were her own.

Fifty men died with their ship. Did they die
for this? Did fifty men die to give life to a ship,
take a soul of iron, and put it in a child? Are they
all dead because of me? Are they dead because
of a lover's kiss?

MIDNIGHT

Midnight and the grasses
all become children's faces,
twilight and the grasses all
become small children's hands.

DRAIAHARA

In the land of Draiahara
the moors cry out for
the skin of songs that

have never been sung
before on the lips of

women who have sunlight
dripping from off their tongues.

THE CITY OF HUUR

The city of Huur surrounded by its adultery walls
seems a dismal world condensed of stone, till one
looks beyond and sees the world beyond even more
corrupted than the city of Huur.

Serpent women drape themselves
upon the dais stairs with their bright topaz eyes,
so, like a cat's but brighter, sharper, gifted with
an obsidian intelligence; I shudder to think of my

lovers beyond the adultery walls into
the hidden lusting worlds of other men.

THE HILLS OF ARKOLIS DONEGAL

Upon the hills of Arkolis Donegal the lairds
with mournful piping have their calls come
back to them, flow back to them upon the hills,
till all the songs discordant are and all the sum of
a poor man's will left unburied where the stones
lie buried and the grain alone is left untilled.

THE BRONZE MAN

I. In the desert of tears stands the bronze man
and all the stars hang round his head like a half-formed crown of thorns.

II. He dreams of the time before when he held the sun in his hands but it has now grown cold and all those billions who bowed to him

have long joined their flesh
with the dust of the desert sands.

III. One day when all the stars have been snuffed out and all the embers fall at his feet will he reach up at last and let himself be born.

WORLDS

In my father's house
are worlds within worlds,
in the cracks of the floor
and the jewel-embered eyes
of insects as they crawl,
secretly feeding
where our crumbs have fell.

And when I die will my death
be echoed even in the cracks
of the floor and jewel-embered eyes
though I but live once and die once
I will die a thousand times.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

{"And after Yi had slain the nine suns
to save the world from fire he was exiled to earth
from heaven. Only the elixir of life
could return him to his home amid the sky but
his wife Heng E accidentally took it instead,
and so, she was condemned to eternity upon the moon
and her husband upon the earth, forever parted."}

*The moon is desolate. Knowing this I am
cast alone into a silver pool
while above me hangs the earth
where my husband dwells.
I know my grief more intimately
than the life that never leaves me.*

*The sun too hangs above, last of the sun-crows
my husband murdered, and hidden
in the mask of the sun
sometimes, just sometimes
I think my husband stares out at me,
hoping to touch my face with slender fingers
that once slew nine suns, and the thought of his touch
gives me the lover's hope
to touch what I can never touch.*

THE DRAGON

I have seen the mermaids singing
in an ocean without beginning
where the dragon has no meaning.

Out in plains of ember unseeing
stands the tide of amber, ambrosia;
I have heard the mermaids singing.

XYTHOQULIA

In Xythoqulia linger the star-flung spider lords,
upon the purple seas, the dancers come before
the fire's song,

and woven amid the hills, the stars,
the grey-touched spiders softly sing, then grow
silent still, while the silk-robed dancers
glance against the purple sun in its purple sky,
and all the time Xythoqulia grows in its
faded stature into nothing as it dies,
and amid its passing lets us die.

THE JEWEL-EDGED SERPENT WOMAN WALKS

Glitteringly the jewel-edged serpent
woman walks

down streets
athwart oblivion,
jewel-eyed as a wasp,
as a sparrow before the
hunter's knife,
and she to my love is cast
and I her venom is,
drunk to myriad
delight 'pon me
as I am but devoured
in the glances that
she has.

THE RAIN WITCH

Setting aside the raindrops
for a moment the grey world
unfolds before her,

the storms recede and human
passion alone takes over, then
because one act

begets another she lets loose
from her hands the torrent
and the flood,

all condensed to a single bitter
sigh that has not the strength
to become a tear.

THE AIR SWIMS DRUNKENLY

The air swims drunkenly to my fingerprints
falls the scent of murdered perfumes as blood
mingles with the air and my clay mingles
with air and blood then falls my drunken verses
as I pen my shadow on the dark side of the moon.

A VOICE WAS HEARD

A voice was heard, cool and alien,
its tongue like a rattling drum.
And we who heard that ancient
sound climbed into the stairways
of each other's skulls as that sound,
cool and alien, like a rattling drum,
pounded beneath our skin like a
throbbing needle and we were
crushed like pools of mercury,
until the sun had warmed us and
we expanded back to lives not
fit for living as we hunted with
spirits made elusive by light.

OMADICA

She was called Omadica
who sent the sparrows into
summer or gardens into
winter's grip to be destroyed.

Finally, she herself decayed
when none believed in her or
were afraid, and left her 'tween
the seasons disarrayed.

MALIJADA

To the strongest dwells the souls of Malijada.
It is not enough to surmount the heights of
heaven but to excel them in such a way
to destroy the heavens in the process.

It is not enough to duel one another
but in such a way that each duellist comes
closest to death before the other dies.

In such a way are they made stronger. In
such a way such souls are driven insane.

GOING TO THE SPIDER CITY OF ATAGATIS

Going thru a desert nameless all over
again anemone-octopi floated past like

corpse-touched flowers and the knight
stood finally by the walls of the city,

the stone-bloated city of Atagatis, but
there were no doors nor gates of any

kind to let him in; he perished there
outside as all had perished once within.

THE MONTGOLIERE

The hot air balloon takes up,
and with a rush of air the world
recedes away, the break of day
descends backward, forward

as eyes accustom themselves
to the absence of the ground, and
the cities stretch along like webs
all silvery and grey, till the
world comes into view again,
ground restored, balloon
punctured like a lung, and only
the thoughts are left, that a portion
of men's thoughts flew today.

FINGER BLED

Fingers bled of perfume and all
the pyramids aslant, athwart of
crimson fire

 neath the turquoise rose
of the errant sun while the
seven-fingered cities of the moon
still come, and
 gone but not goodbye
all is left as but a fragrance we'll
barely recall before we chance
 but twice to die.

BENEATH THE FRAGILE LAYERS

Beneath the fragile layers
of my skull
 are cities within
cities,
 each as delicate
as a frozen flower,
 each
as perfect as the
 midnight rose;

like ivory spires
 they grow,
covered in scales
of frost.

Within those delicate
minarets
 dance the drunken
dreams of my vision,
 buried like
velvet wine behind the shadow
of my soul.

ELAGABALUS

*Grandmother, why did you
give me the crown? Mine is not
the way of glory,
mine is but to pray before Baal's
black stone, and hold fast in faiths
too pure to save,
as I sit upon the throne
and Rome before me bows.*

EOLYOR

Set the sails and the wind its work is done.
It never notices the task before it; such is the wind. Eolyor,
be the wind. We struggle thru our lives in vain
 if all we do is done oppressed, and the crust
 of bread we take, we despise as we devour it.
 Bones break only under pressure or restraint.
The heart breaks only when it allows itself to break.
Be the wind. Life is too short to curse
 life's pale brevity, or the heart's sin.

THE BALLAD OF AVRIEL PARGRET

She threw the lattice wide as blades run
white with blood, and there, upon the grave she lay
her threads upon his bed,
 white with the blades once stained
with blood, black as the moon once dimmed
by the alchemies of Isis to hide
 the lovers in their beds, never to rise again.

THE PALE HOUR BLEEDS THE FINEST

The pale hour bleeds the finest,
that inglorious strength of nobility which
rises and raises us in trench

or firing squad or
witch-blaze before an angry
mob to who we are
and better than we are
and ever could have been.

CLOUD PAINTING ON THE CEMENT NILE

All the nature of my thought
and of my words descends from this place
at the world's edge;

the rough beast
of the sea is older than dreams,
and if I desired

I could spend an age
lost in the rhythm of her body,
flow

as a grain of sand upon the
shadow of her face, her monstrous,
death-god face.

Each day we move upon a changeless
desert which suffocates

this second child
of God, this harbinger of harvests
which God brought forth
in the birthing of

our bodies,
and the sounding
of our names.

And on that desert of a street
I paint and bridge my streets
inside of you, until
the echo of a crow is heard
beneath your spirit,
and each shade
and blossoming
symphony of green and gold
pours down your eyes,
and beneath
your eyes.
All the lost faces of the sky
shall become your
face;
all the shifting rhythm
of the sea
shall blend
beneath your blood.

Upon the burning river
of the street
 come and find
the clouds, and find them
march with
 faces such
as yours.

MY DESTINY

He shall murder shadows
with a kiss and murder my dreams
 with a crumpled rose
 which neither
men nor gods
 may know as anything
except a rose.

THEY HAVE THINNED OUR SPEECH

They have thinned our speech to a thread of onyx;
embrace your silences, devour your clues of words.
Let the world thin our songs and with our songs
will we weave anew the world, for a time.

JIA'S EGG

In the sand, she built her nest, strange
ostrichlike, her feathers partially seared
to scales or grass, and she placed her egg
there, rounded mother-of-pearl sphere, and then
left, and we took it, Jia and I, and watched over
 it a time. Until that night.

In our house, I heard her stirring, and knew
she'd gone down to see the egg, as she
always did when sleep eluded her, but tonight
I felt an odd stirring and so crept down,
and watched as Jia gazed upon it in its artificial
nest, and I saw her features change just then.

Feathers seemed to grow from off her skin
and her face glowed bright and yellow seemed
her eyes, and I went to her, shaking her to
wake her but she looked oddly at me, asked
me what was wrong, and I realized she was fine.

We took the egg back, and all the time I swear
I saw her eyes yellow like a spoiled wine,
but we put it back and went home again, there
on the sands, while far away the
world of our home was cracked and burnt, and
bled a scarlet stain.

I know not what to make of this except, perhaps
the egg, like any possibility, only shows us the
worst of what we are.

That night I looked in the mirror. Now
there are no mirrors in our house anymore.

AT THE CITY OF DUNCARA

At the city of Duncara
on the plains
of Enduram
all the nighted worlds
shall bow down
to you,
my shadow child,
and we shall fly
upon
the ocean of the
white-lipped air,
and
dissolve into
golden dreams
beneath
golden
eyes,
upon the Nile of
the sun,
where all the gods
are dead above
the city of Duncara.

THE SUN HAS SHONE

The sun has shone and now
grows cold; treasure's luster
faded, yet gold;
youthful joy is shaded
by the old.

LISTEN TO THE EMPTINESS

Listen to the emptiness of a windless
day, when there is no rain and the sky is pale.

Empty is the world at such a time with
such a clarity of truth as we can understand.

All the world is empty, all the world
shall rise like a man freed from drowning

and upon the surface of the void
exhale like one unburdened of all things

then downward shall it fall again.
What man having lived knows not the truth I speak?

SHADOW OF UNSEEN MIRROR

Turned into the shadow of the
unseen mirror,
the splinter of your laughter
 burned.

Days do not envy us anymore.
Oh, lovely things that never
were.

The city on the plains
is deserted now. The peoples
of the summer
and the peoples of the spring
 have fled.

Days do not envy us at having
been. The black river of living
is almost

 yet spent. I am
alone, the last sentence of an epic
made by no one, told by none.
I have departed heaven again.

IN THE FIELDS OF PLAY AND LAUGHTER

It was a bomber's moon, too bright
and clear. I stood in the field alone
I feared. Then she came, serene, lithe,
 pantherlike her stride. At
play then, we at play, trees beyond grim
titans outracing day because at day trees
 they'd return to again, we at play,
 she whose face lay hidden in the

almost-night, like a rotted flower
bulb twisting lengthwise aright.
Then came the buzz, insectlike
 of the bomber and beyond I
watched a village caught to fire,
like paper caught in the wax drops
of the candle bleeding fire. She
 took me then, I the last to fall.
Poor, sad, pathetic, my desire.

THE RAGGED YEARS

In myrkwater gardens beyond
the midnight sections where the chalk
writers write, then pause, listening
to the sound about to come,

there arise the ragged years.

Imagine a day as nothing but
the scale of a beast, seven nothing more
than a ragged wound, and a season
reduced to a slender limb, carrying the

full weight of the thing abroad, like
some black bull or mare distending out
ward, downward, across an empty

nothing. And you are carried along,
parasite or virus in the mane of the
womb-death passing 'cross white infinite void,
never knowing you were there.

The chalk writers then continue with
their prophecies, and remove them as they
write them, as if they never were.

THE VAMPIRES OF WESWICK

From every sleeping oak the dead awake.
Through the night they come as moonless shadows
and make themselves the drinkers of dreams.
In every home they cover children

in strange divinities

and take away all the sorrows of suffering
from their minds. Barmaids, enduring their subtle

humiliations are robbed of their bitterness,
and sleep soundly.

Every infant is taken up in spider-thin
hands and rocked carefully to ancient hymns,
sung by the dead who ride their skeletal steeds
through the moonless skies.

My young daughter, listen. The dark is
never to be feared. Listen to the wind and
know that I too shall ride one night on a skeletal
steed, and settle your daughter to peaceful dreams
with ancient, darkly sacred hymns.

THE MOON PEOPLE

They come when their moon is not there,
or when ours is full, or when it is a sliver cast
against the sky. They come as if all unaware,

passing slender through all our rooms, past
the small doors where children sleep, slender
silhouettes of lovers who cannot rest but fast

in their hungers merely by seeing us. Tender
is their thought toward us as they pass along
till dawn uprises a serpentine head to render

all the country of the night to shadows long
and still and fervent in decay. Finally, do they
return, glancing back behind them, our strong

forms their feasts, glancing last to us. May they
remain in our company? If they do, they'll burn.

Part II.

Crimson countryside

WHOSE GOD SHALL LEAST I SERVE?

Whose God shall least I serve
when all divinity is poured into so many
sacred streams?

Shall I be in awe of burning
bushes or the vine,
that door to God or demon equally?

Am I the son of Dionysus or Yahweh?

THE BALLAD OF ISYLAN

*My father bid me hide and hunted me,
for my cowardice in war.
Commanded by another he came for me,
going to the places he had gone,

the wasteland which he said would
cover all my sins both made
and done, and I was yet to make.
I drew my bow and fired,*

*and I think he knew the shot
would come. I'll ride and I will flee.
His spirit I am sure will go with me.*

PROTECT THE FUTURE

Protect the future as you protect
your enemies, by hanging them over
a blazing sun-stained fire
by a thick iron chain.

HAROLD BARBANE

He takes down the book again,
the one from childhood that says
“This is the life of Harold Barbane.”
He lovingly clutches the book
to his chest, sits in a chair worn
out by years, opens the tome
and on the first page is written the
day when first he came into the
world, and so looking down at the
dawn of his life for a moment the
pain slips away. But pages remain
and tell all the stories, of fear and
fear’s conquest, and fear’s victory.
Life is no story fit to be told.
When the last page is read to
the shelf does it lay. And the book
then is gone but the man still remains.

SHIFT LIKE WATER

Shift like water lives these are,
everything passes but the words remain
impure,
a half-bred fossil clinging here to hint
at secrets never shared. I am, my words are
here to prove I am
but who I am I cannot tell,
my words they cannot say; poor witness that
I am with words like hollow clay.

ILYOKU'S PROMISE

Today my son I go to war. I will stand upon a battlefield where the men of my lord will wait for me.

*I will stand and fight against those our lord has said will do us harm.
He is just my son and so when*

*the war is over and we have won
I promise to come back to you.
My lord has promised that we will win*

even against ten thousand, though we are few. And this I promise you

that when I return, we will take up our lives again and live in peace forever, for this our lord has said.

MR. YUROKASA

He is a cog in a great machine that knows
him not, nor does his wife when he comes home,
nor do his friends for he has none, nor even
does his mistress recognize him.

Standing on the station for the train
it seems as if taunt wires run through his face
for his jaw is tight, his feet are worn
yet he cannot move from his stop and
does not try anymore to move.

Only his desk is the place that he loves,
and the desk is the only mistress his wife has feared.
Sitting at the centre of his world Mr. Yurokasa
becomes a cog in a great machine and when
he is dead it will forget him, lose interest
in this small part of itself and find another
to take the place of the missing gear.

AD MEMORIAM

When I was a child too young to understand
I watched a caterpillar crawl to me, and somehow
though I know it now unreal

it seemed it had a human face, the face of a man
pressed on the concrete walkway where it crawled,
its hairy worm body

shifting forward with its movement somehow sinister,
as it looked at me without love or hate,
without compassion,

and I screamed. I'll never forget its hold over me,
and my dreams, though I know it couldn't have had
a human face and I was too young to understand.

A SPARROW ON A REED BY A FROZEN POND IN WINTER

There is some desolation in the
act, in a sparrow on a reed by
a frozen pond in winter,

some sure loneliness in the
act of watching and you finally
understand this was how God

must have felt before the Fall.

A BEE ON MY ARM

There was a bee on my arm
one summer day in the
courtyard of an old house.

I let her wander on my arm
then let her fly away.

If I had struck, she would have
struck, and we'd both regret
our wounding actions.

ALALIS

I drew a rose from the ground
and taking up a stone into the river
Alalis the stone I threw.

Up from the river there came
the rose I'd drawn from the ground
as my heart had before,
though now as the stone
was it black and cold.

NOI AERIH

I shall once in the last of my days depart
as Arthur did, mortally wounded by some tragedy,
to Noi Aerih where I shall rest, and await the day when
Ducrae to me returns, his sword slung behind

him like a useless bayonet, as he and I
in paradise remember the wars we fought,
the boys we lost in trenches fit for nothing
but open graves, as Noi Aerih closes over our
dead soldiers peacefully, like a shroud.

SERPENT'S SISTER

The wires run like corset strings along
the streets cutting all our feet except the
serpent's sister who glides beneath

and gives birth to day in shadowed
reaches because the moon is cast up
on beaches born of bones and sand.

MR. CYORIN

Mr. Cyorin doesn't bleed or burn,
he stands so still at the railway station,
and even after the bomb hit, he didn't
notice it, just kept on waiting in the
rubble until the man in the uniform
said, "Are you alright?"

And Mr. Cyorin answered him,
"Yes, I'm fine, just waiting for the
6:45. Tell me, do you have the time?"

PALACES BUILT INTO THE SKY

There are blunt palaces built into
 the sky hanging
down like roses in absentia from
 the world and here I sit for
I have seen
 the sun in a sunless summer day

when the void did not decay nor did
 the world in her
dismay remember me, but rather
 let me view the changing laws
of nature cast
 and out of this repast, I felt the very

continents turn in some savage splinter
 motion, and collapse.

I take my duty, I cast my life's art away,
 struggling against the night,
against the day,
I take a stroll in the underworld,
 where I will not decay.

THE IDOLS

Across a sea of frozen jagged spires, I saw the idols
in the distances catching fire, turning to burning
figures wrestling 'pon the plains, while the ocean
licked at wounds invisible and profane.

And I have heard it written in books of
iron, in cities of stone, that there are places hidden
where the demons are alone, where scholars hunt
for secrets not their own. Yes, I have read those
books of iron, and I know.

Far away there stands a forest all of stone
where branches reach with hungry fingers, looking
for the chance to make of flesh a feast. The
shadows softly sing or whimper on the wing

as a ship but sails against the frozen seas,
searching for nothing. And on a mantelpiece,
a man's ashes are gathered, left as sacred
witness while his children have

their lovers, (not though with each other,)
while but his ashes dream of those frozen seas when
he had flesh. And all is written as was written
once before, upon those ancient shores of

memories when pages were left burned but
have become as new flesh born, in their subtle
loveliness, naked feast but for the worms.

THE GHOST TRAIN THRU AN ETHEREAL LANDSCAPE OF CORAL

The whistle of the train stirs up ghosts,
white shades or black leaves and thru forests
the colour of dried coral I reach with
slender fingers of memories all days which
are no more. I do more though,

climb aboard, let worlds click by, autumn
and winter, summer and spring, and on
black wing everyone becomes discomposed,
like masks held aslant on faces of people
blank as pages unwritten of. And still
the train moves on, and I stand by the tide
as the shells are revealed one by one,
each letting forth a little cry, as each last life
is fatally, finally done, or become undone.

THE RAVENS HAVE HANDS

The ravens have hands, fingers of feathers,
flexible and slender, and I imagine them as
women sometimes, as black feathers to hair,
eyes blackened of midnight into women's

eyes, but of course no one is there. Or I
imagine chairs or tables succumbed to
human shape, trees staring down at me with
hungry fingers, or hungry eyes, because,

because when I look at you, you mutely look
away. And I have nothing more to say. If this
is love's beginning with you I'll simply walk away.

THE SNAKE

The snake is a mother to the innocent,
a lover in the dark when all other lovers have fled.

If you are brave enough,
or foolish enough, tickle your lover beneath
her chin. If you live then she loves you and will
take you away one night

beyond the moon,
where all is innocence.

If she hates you then you will die
and be purified in her mouth, left as bleached bones.
There is purity in death in either case.

THE LOVERS ON THEIR BED

So, it comes to this, the knots all tied,
love's illusion spent, leaving two strangers on a bed,
groping toward trust, intimacy, hope,
fearing the worst of each other,
the half-felt dreads that they, at this moment face
some sort of betrayal, or the sense
of some half-realized mistake.
But still, they grope toward each other
anyway. They can't dare do otherwise.

CASTILACE

Castilace, the man you have
loved will love you no more.
He is the ocean,
you are the island.
Though you may touch him,
but cold you'll become.

AT THE STONES OF EHRENCLOU

At the stones of Ehrenclou
I watched you undress the night
like a little girl;
by the gods of winter and fire
how I have loved you, my angel,
burnt in flames older than betrayal.

THE LOVE SONG OF PENCROFT WAXWING

We fly my dear lover into the twilight
unremitting, into the traces of our days resplendent
by our lives. My lust has caught me in
 a snare of love serene by your eyes
for we are serene beyond the measure of a summer
 milked of sighing. Let us fly my wingless girl
into the night resplendent with flowers
 which all have our childrens'
faces staring up at us
as we glide the night expectant
 into an age that has lost its
reason and the reasons yet to weep.

THE FEAST

She has eaten deeply of love,
until her eyes are filled with it
and her mouth swells
with the flavour of desire.
I could starve in her glances.

HOW ARE WE DECEIVED?

How are we deceived, my faithless messenger?
I have seen the cuts along your breast, love's ornament, and
love's fulfilment so carelessly

revealed. Were his fingers
long as his nails? Did he play and chance to find you,
naked, open,

feigning surprise to find him, open?
Oh, how we are deceived!

And yet your faithlessness has become
a blessing to me. Better such a man left with you,
and let betrayal smear

along your lips and
your mouths the stench of what you've
done, then give to me one unworthy
for my bed. Go back, and never
return. Let your lover take in you, again.

TO BREIJHA

When all she holds is in her
hands, when all the shards have melted
fast and all the amber of regret has
passed through her bones,
then does she remember me and coldly
lies her troubled will that willed her
love unwisely and unwell.

ALL THE UNIVERSE WE'RE LIVING IN NOW

We are each a fragment, a splinter of
Creation's mirror trying desperately
to put ourselves together again,

trying to see the ruined universe created
from ourselves yet the mirror itself is
unharmed, the universe we're living in

goes on as if nothing had happened and
perfect in its flawless machinery moves
forward without even noticing us

here at this corner of itself. The mirror
remains as perfect as before; only we are
broken into splinters and broken down.

SIGNS

In a thousand subtle signs on
line on line on line I echo,
making thoughts their cancers,
holding the embers tight,
remembering past flames
and future fires,
though my thoughts
can never be stilled in ice.

GENETIC ACTOR

I moulded his flesh into a monster
and he became my finest child.

But when the horror movie
ended and I had no use for my finest
child, I crumpled him into a ball, and
threw him away.

I moulded her flesh into
a lover and she became my finest
child. But when the porn film ended

I took her home and used her as
I willed, and she my finest child. When
all is done who will throw me away?

THE SOLITARY RACE

We found them in cracks between mountain
walls, in jungles the colour of black weeds,
and they scrambled from our touch. They
fled from the sight of us.

In appearance, they were us though,
human-limbed and faced, but naked,
straggling behind any protective place.

We learned later they couldn't come
to us, that in this world humanity took
a different turn. For if two met they would
fight till only one survived, whether it was
men or women, or children,

or any of the above against the other one.
They were a solitary race who only came
together in times of mating and then dissolved
away, slinking to mountains and

jungles to hide behind. We left and never
came back. I never thought I'd consider our
own humanity so kind. I had been blind.

THE BLACK SUN

The sky is emptied by a black sun
at last, pulling years and days into it,
including us. And all our thoughts

become its country there.
Life is but the dream of dying
suspended before the end.

THE WORLD OF THE DYING SUN

1) Today is the last day of forever,
the day when the continents wither back to dust,
and all the living and the dead are now together.

This is the world of the dying sun, the ember
and the cinder of a light we circle now, and must.
Today is the last day of forever.

The day when the continents wither back to dust
I remember for I stood as a scarecrow watching her,
I trapped in an hourglass and she a chrysalis of my lust.

Some few fled to stars, and will never
see home again. We will never see home, trust
that all the living and the dead are now together.

2) This is the world of the black sun.
The jungles have turned to shadow, dark
as pitch and jaguars have the shape of oil. *Run.*

The beasts of the field hunger after us, they have begun
to take a human cruelty, a pure divine cruel spark.
This is the world of the black sun.

3) This is a world of living night,
the thought of night becomes herself, takes shape
of mad women or broken gods, haunted by light.

Along waters thorn barges come, ships that might
we sail on or pierce ourselves, become tattered shape
of mad women or broken gods, haunted by light.

She sings to us her crippled song in twilight.
The goddess sings to us to come, become the shape
of mad women or broken gods, haunted by light.

4) In labyrinths and mazes gold, behind golden walls
the shadows all they come, shadows and the feast
of shadows all upon themselves, all

of shadows all upon themselves, all
upon themselves behind bright golden walls
in mountains where the beast

Silence comes and falls, where the shadows all
they come, the shadows and the feast.

5) In labyrinths and mazes gold, behind golden walls
the shadows all they come, shadows and the feast
of shadows all upon themselves, all

of shadows all upon themselves, all
upon themselves behind bright golden walls
in mountains jagged as a scar where the beast
Silence comes and falls, where the shadows all
they come, the shadows and the feast.

6) Man has turned to statues slow as glass dissolving
 in a bright wine-venomed sea
and women now have wings they tatter thru the air,
their flesh sings

etched into the skies where the sun is dung-dull
as a tree, branches suspended above,
we upon its branches, a broken wing
 in a bright wine-venomed sea.

7) It is the last day, and nothing remains.
The thought of us is gone, and nothing sustains.
Still, if I could hold out my hand to you I would.

The stars are cold and I feel the end of time.
I feel the end, the end of all, and yet I climb . . .
The thought of us is gone, and nothing sustains.

If all are gone then who am I?

I am these words written, these words of my . . .
It is the last day, and nothing remains.

If I am but word upon a page who gains?
Still, if I could hold out my hand to you I would.
It is the last day, and nothing remains.

The stars are cold and I feel the end of time.
I feel the end, the end of all, and yet I climb . . .
Still, if I could hold out my hand to you I would.

If all are gone then who am I?
I am these words written, these words of my . . .
Still, if I could hold out my hand to you I would.

THE HAIGHTBURY FLYER

The Haightbury Flyer has crossed the sea
with a deafening roar, has filled the sky
with strange laughter . . .

the wings of the ship burn through the air,
the skin of the ship burns through my bones
and nothing is left of me where the ship

has turned on the wave and upward glides
to the country of God, leaves me in exile far from
my home, and returns to the lands of the living.

THE PALE RHYTHM OF HER BODY

I remember the smooth pavement the colour of
tanned sky, and I upon it, no older than six winters.
I remember there, sitting there half-aware of my
clothes clinging blue to me, as I watched the
soft, slow recall of a caterpillar marching
threadbare toward me.

I remember then, softly now, so softly then
the pale rhythm of its body jewel-black rising,
falling, rising again on legs invisible as dark
shadows in night. But I remember them, having
seen them coming toward me then.

I remember the mad way it would softly move
toward me, I staring down at her as finally it
looked up and I screamed. I remember her
human face staring blankly at me then.

RED GRASS

Born in the red grass I become the red grass,
become my wife putting flowers by my tomb.

SURFACE TENSION

On the water I walked, being stalked
by my reflection below me.
As I walked, I talked to him, or he
 talked back, or I was just
listening to him, nothing in the whole
world besides this,
 dark blue water, myself
and he. Suddenly I saw him bend
up or I bent down

 and putting his finger
to the water touched it as all of a sudden
 he fell upward into ocean as I
dissolved without a sound; he drowned.

IF ALL THE WORLD WERE PAPER

If all the world were paper and all the seas
were ink I would spend a continent upon
a single word.

 But what that word becomes
I cannot say for it cannot be written yet.
Speech and voice only
 exist in dimension
to the greatness of their expanse and reach.
It would take a continent's dimensions
 to describe my love or hate.

OBJECT LESSON

Her hand was turned to that of a grey
insect's limb,
but she was still human even after this.

When her skin
grew like driftwood, when her eyes
grew dark as
pitch, when her blood turned bright
yellow like the
crushed bodies of corpse-ants still
she remained
human, even as the parasite within
rewrote her,
still, she retained her humanity, in
killing us who
had harmed her. An insect does not
seek revenge.

IN THE CELLS OF PALE FLOWERS ARE WE CONDEMNED

On desks, in gardens recline
pale flowers, lusting, thirsting
after us, brought from dying lands.

We could stare at them forever,
twist our roles with theirs, arrive
suspended in sightless cells

and watch them walk away from
us, content of all we've been.

THE SUN ZOO BOOK

Each page was a sun, of course, held
incaged. He collected them, tearing
pieces out of the sky until one day
the night was dark, no star remained.
So, I asked him to put his cage into the

black and turning back he tossed the
pages up, until the stars were all restored.
So now the cage is there, his menagerie,
we living on the interior side of a page of
a book he wrote about capturing the suns,
when he was young.

THE UYHME

They pass between walls,
sticklike and skeletal, and they
simply won't leave.

The Uyhme arrived six
months earlier, ghostly refugees,
and they can't be touched

or touch anything here at
all. Still, they won't leave, but
pass through the world as

walls, watching us or ignoring us
and I don't know which is worse.

Perhaps they simply imagine
we are haunting them the same.

UNDER THE EVENING LAMP

Under the evening lamp the ravages
of a carpet start pulling at my shoes.
Mosaic looks up at me and grins.
Sealed orders in their envelopes start
whispering to one another I will
fail them, as if the words betray the
man who wrote them. My shoes now,
leather, hot leather imprinted by the
soles of my feet complaining I use
them without consideration, as if the
death of the animal who made them is
no concern of mine. Finally, the lamp
taking on the voice of a god whispers
all is done and finished now. I rest.

RED LEAVES AND ROSES

“Stolen or strayed?”
One often asks such things about husbands.
I say he has strayed,
gone west with the sun and her whom
he loves, today.
She takes some leaves red as my tear-stained
eyes and roses black
as pitch, works her magic into them, gives
her sorcery to me,
for a reasonable price. I need only break the

vial and it will seep out,
my venom into all the world to seek him and to
find him, and
murder him thereby. I hold my hand.
It is enough I have this power over him.
For now, and always after, I am content.

PENDULUM SWINGS

You've got to want to die to give
birth sometimes.

Dull as lead and copper
or the touch of the grasses' thorns
still gives birth to the seed
of corpses

which you are viewing.
Sometimes only grief lets itself
out to joy.

If every day has its
opposite though what is the
opposite of that sliver you hold
between indifference and
gratitude at being born?

THE HOUSE ON THE MOUND

We drank fire and wine there in the house on the mound. Invented gods a while, gave them names of those we hated when alive, as if those we hated had power over us, more than we had power over them.

West of midnight the moon fleet came. You'd see all the lonely ones who slit themselves sideways along the wrists, or hanged, making orchards of their bodies. Prophets, priests, and kings were last, all tattered rags of pale nothings, all the same.

Finally, by the shifting of the fire, I stood and stared at my own shadow, my shadow answering me as dawn came. Broken men were we when we were alive. Broken we are now. Yet being dead yet, we will survive, same as the house on the mound that never can decline.

SCORPION'S LOGIC

He would not touch hands nor ever embrace.
She would not. Each was budded from a stem.
Instead, they wore short-beaked golden masks.
Only then would they come to one
another's company. But never in love.

Dread always plagued him in the country where
dead lay passion. The world where sex is not.
Other logics rule this splintered ground.
Lead is golden now though still is lead.
He could not touch her. Lacked the mind to do.

Together they will never love. They will walk thru
other dying cities without regrets, obedient to
he or she who murdered/made their children, all this
bothered, troubled way, their lust outstretched,
dreadful act of sex empty and horrid as the tomb.

They never touched hands.
They hadn't the will to anyway.
Impotently man has created man.

DOG

Looking at a dog
embraced in a child's arms,
seeing the first spark of the ember
on the dark of the road
of evolution,
going back to the time of wolves,
realizing how much they
had domesticated
us.

SHELL

I. I found a snail's shell, yellow as a piece
of parchment, hollowed out like a banker
who forgot the scent of wealth.

Inside of her were four smaller shells, each
yellow as a piece of parchment, each hollow
as she was. Four worlds collapsed

into their mother and their mother collapsed
into her children like a star who lost her light.
Someday the cities of man will be

as these remnants are before they are taken up
by the thoughts of alien things and admired briefly,
before they are laid down a final time.

II. I found a snail's shell, yellow piece
of parchment hollowed as a banker
who forgot the scent of wealth.

Inside were four smaller shells, each
yellow pieces of parchment hollow
as she was. Four worlds collapsed

to their mother, their mother collapsed
to her children like a star who lost her
light. Someday cities of man will

be as these remnants are before being
taken up by thoughts of alien things,
admired briefly, then put down a final time.

FIRE SWEPT EARTH CLEAN

Fire swept earth clean, only we
remained, small town on the
fire's black edge,
ocean's rough ledge,
and beyond the ocean death
of a different kind. Breath
came last too
late, last too . . .

SAVOURING THE LAST THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE

Savouring the last things in the universe
I eat a final apple, recite a fragment of
a prayer some priest wrote down

a billion years ago, listen to my
favourite opera before all the stars slip
away smooth as a wintry sea of glass, and

feel the darkness of the universe crouch
down and become small as a whimpering
child obliterated in the glare
of an even greater final night.

Part III.

The ash lands

BLACK AS SNOW

Bright enamel black as snow,
cancer-eyed women laughing there,
they obey no certain thing.

Wasp-eyed women wait, watch
a game of dice throwing then know
fear is a kindness, a bright wing

black as snow beside those men
of indulgences, those women
of storms. On javelin hills beside
those hills of infinite invention
which never carried blade nor
sorrow the laughing women falter

once, weep at all now gone,
for they are memories of
memories, spent. It is the final

day, so some might say if any were left.
Death is still a kindness sometimes.

THE SUMMER WITCH

The summer witch is sailing round
the lamp sun, moth in winter,

grass hyenas feeding on
corpse savannas, swimming fire

till out of the night decayed they
come, those lonely ones of winter
who had no shame.

THE ADVERSARIES OF THE FLOOD

A white snake with ice-blue eyes
is staring at me now. She has
come delicate as snow to quench her
thirst by the cistern, and I as well.

She is the daughter of the dragonfly
darknesses of sleep, undulating
body of black and white shimmering
in heat, a year composed of scales,
each scale a day or night.

I imagine then the children of my
face, those unborn futures left
unwritten yet and how with a prick
of her kiss, all would be ended then.

I could cease to be in her embrace,

let her coil and curl her loving lonely
body over me and around, until both
are spent, she of her venom, I of my
years. But the children

of a time as yet unwritten beckon,
this blue planet beneath my feet still
turns, until I imagine all the earth
is ocean, dull azure skin pretending

to be ground or sky, myself nothing
but a drop of water in it and upon it.

The serpent sails on unbidden. I am
alone. The world stops a moment
in gazing at me as if I were some alien
thing and then moves on, a titan
whose shadow eclipses mine, just
as my shadow eclipses hers.

TARHENISJA

An orchid appeared a woman then to me,
in the country of Tarhenisja.

Looked like someone I once knew.

Couldn't be.

We see the dead clothed of roses'
skin, or ivy sinew. They speak the whispered
conversations we once knew,
play marionettes
of our memories, or worse.

Worse they are true and we are false, but
the grass-skinned children
they invented to humour us,
little knowing

if pierced we'd bled emerald. Or
so she whispers because I whispered once
to her. The circle once
closed is closed again,
and then no more is said.

And then no more is said . . .

BEFORE OBLIVION'S SMILE

Before oblivion's creeping black smile
they turned to the task again. Two empires set
their labours to obliterate all former things, yet
record the obliteration. As if keeping score. Met
finally at the end was nothing left, all miles
of epics, cathedrals, portraits, or mosaics of
past faces, each in the act of being loved

or being finally gone in the sound of piles
of ashes or stones torn by rough burnt
hands, till all was spent. Man then left unlearnt
of his own past was left screaming at burnt
stones to come and be again, to be piled
again, to oblivion again. At the end the winners
committed suicide en masse, leaving life
only for the sinners.

IN THE VINES A GOLDEN CITY IS

In the vines a golden city is
where insects curl in worship there
beneath idols of trees stone-faced in bliss
who never feel the
worshippers' embrace of them, care
not that insects love. The city labyrinthine, this
pale latticework of roads to branches
 come when
darkness is the child of foliage, shadow
the flesh the insects cling to, swallow
 as their own. Yet death there none knows,
 or yet can know.

OBSIDIAN JUNGLES

Obsidian jungles glisten.
Upon crimson world.

For scarlet kings.

On scarlet thrones.

Wasplike iridescent kings.

A silver tear. Felt on cheeks.

Silver dissolving crimson.

The sky bleeds. Bleeds not now.

Spider webs glisten.

The prey released.

Suddenly all wings.

All have wings. Suddenly
they flee. Gardens are empty.

Sky filled now. With

voices singing.

Childhood has ended.

Kings become chrysalises.

Awakened in birth. Scatter

themselves forever. Leave
their shadow-selves.

Far behind them.

In obsidian gardens.

Imprisoned as amber.

Imprisons a wasp.

MY SIN

My sin looks like a little girl now.

Perhaps my sin is unborn.

Perhaps there is a world of the
unborn, an empire of the never
conceived where I am nothing but
a wraith conceived out of a mind

which does not exist. And
in that empire of the unborn, I am
the sin of such a creature there,
being there, though never being
it has no sin to clothe it. And

therefore, there I do not exist.

Not even my sins.

INTO AIR

She knows when she will die
and when she dies her body will decay,
brittle-become like broken autumn

twigs, slowly collapse to dust
and the dust commingle with the air and
as this some fragment of her survives,

a song without end amid a
multitude of songs without end, to
console the few living left of us. But

she doesn't know why. In that
respect she is as human as I.

PALANQUIN

Scarlet sand and upon it, on
thin roads of silver in rounded palanquins
of silver-sea-blue ride things of ocean.

Sea slugs, size of men, no, larger,
blue as their palanquins and silver,
their squires velvet-worm-faced creatures
sliding along sand, like runes, or tattoos
seeking their own escape from skin.

Road goes on toward a tree, black as night
is not. Tree extends upward forever, each

leaf broad as a continent, rough
and ragged-edged. When they reach this,
which they never will, they will be carried

up into the ocean of ancient stars,
but, they never will. The road retreats back
a step at a time, and all the world is still. As

if these were ghosts waiting to be born
in the outer womb of a dead woman's body.

THIS UNKNOWN WORD

*Words, their meanings shift
like the shape of water in a cup.
Only the rhythm remains.
Could be anything; a scrap of some
mythology, a golden city, the final son
of heaven.*

*Words have no form yet shapes
these lines upon the page.
We are all names we make for ourselves
to give the faintest echo
of who, of what we are.*

TITHONUS ROSE

Imagine the plant, sinuous leaves
and golden blossomed head, sitting
on your mantelpiece in the sun,
basking in the ocean of the warmth,
you there, feeling the leaves

bore beneath your skin. It is
taking you my daughter, stretching a
year into a century, so that you will
have a century.

Notice the small grubs at the base
feeding upon the nectar of
the stem. That will be you in time my
child. All this room will be Ragnarok
and this our Yggdrasil.

All for you. Why couldn't
you have just poisoned your mother
like any common man?

KULLERVO

Kullvero crippled by the storms
he made,
by ascending to his sister's side
with that haughty, that proud eye
which blinds the seer
of all the wrongs he's done
till even the storms crash upon him,
and shelter him no more.

A MAN IS IN A LIBRARY

A man is in a library. He is trying
to remember a book. He does not
know it now. Glancing to
the shelf he sees another.
On the spine of it is his name.
Pulling the book down he turns
pages. Randomly. He finds
a passage. In the passage, a man
is in a library. He is trying to
remember a book. He does
not know it now. Glancing to
the shelf he sees another. On
the spine of it is his name . . .
Sometimes one moves in a labyrinth
while staying in place.

IN HELL A MAN LIVED

In hell, a man lived. There was
no fire. No ice. Nor suffering from pain.
All hell consisted of was this.

Once before his birth, he
glimpsed something. He saw once
the utter glory of some god.

This faded yet remained.

All he did from then on was return
to that memory when he had not tasted
breath. Hell was isolation
from this perfect moment . . .

When he lay on his bed, dying
at last, he was certain he would see
that light again. Or never.

This was why he had not
killed himself. That fear. As he lay
dying he saw the light of his life,
the brilliance of himself.
In perfect clarity. In that moment
only was there heaven.

Then this too was lost.
Do not know if he went to hell
or a further heaven.

If life could only be measured
in a moment . . . only then I'd know.

LEECH DAUGHTER

Black boneless child
takes up our blood,
sightless shifter of form,
miracle-oracle fixer
 of the broken,
she who heals, not
knowing that she heals,
while we wound eagerly,
knowing that we wound.

HE CARRIES THE SUN ON HIS BACK

He carries the sun on his
back but never feels the flame.

 His is a blinding life as
each small thing he does we
notice, each small success
 a blazing wound to us.

Along the streets he walks we do
our best not to notice openly,
lest his eyes meet our eyes
 and blinded we become.

OCEAN

Dark blond hair, her standing there,
beside the ocean now.

Claiming she sees another world
reflected on ocean's underside.

By shores that hide in
shadows blue they wait she says,
they wait for you . . . for me?

Yes, because there you are
not man, nor woman, nor child,
but fin. She says, she declares
it true you are a fin, and teeth, and
blue an ocean shadow blue,

darker than the water that
envelops you. And there you sing,
or sin. She is not certain which.

The song which she is hearing,
always ever nearing, the song
which she is hearing forces
them upon the shore to step into the
water, into the jaws you bore.
She imagines legions striding
thru gates of sharpened teeth and gore.

If you approach, she will throw
herself away, into ocean to
drown like dying suns. If you
retreat she says you do not love her
and she will do the same.

So, you simply walk away,
she calling after you now, demanding
that you stay, to watch her fade away.
But you've seen this all before,
just yesterday . . .

WOUNDED MAN

Dead blind eyes they
were which turned to the sun,
dead blind eyes which
hung inwardly down to
a dead blind soul
which can never know
that no one can heal the wounds
the wounded man wishes not to heal.

I AM CAUGHT

I am caught in my own fashion to life.
I know there sits a demon perpetually
swinging like a pendulum through
my mind, like a tide that roars
against my skull, abides only to its will
splintered on a thousand desires unequally.

Miseries are many. Does my madness know?
Perhaps the demon deep within is suffering
too for being there, as I like the tide crash
into him, and we both collide.

AUTOPSY

Tended too late by men with duelling scars,
reclining on a pristine mirror reclined upon,
remnant you in this too brief-fragile world.

They reach shallow fingers thru snakes
of intestines wrapped about their
hands, peel back your bladder's skin.

There is your urine a yellow wine, other
mirror subtle bloating of your skin as
ten trillion mouths make you their silent feast.

Not in mourning or praise or judgement.

The doctors crack open
the skull. There beneath
a splinter of your love
for the life you had.

GRIEF TOO

Why is grief a child of man?
We are countries
 home to creatures
 we cannot help but make;
 grief entwines like serpent
or serpent's son,
 anger as a bull
without legs still crawls,
impotently ploughing fallow fields

while joy is hidden in raven wings
bone-white
 on trees of suicides
or the ash-cut vine.

CENTAURS

We grow as centaurs the older we go
and the more we age,
 who first born seemed children

like all world's wealth of men,
but after a while fool ourselves
and eventually truths of
what we are
 and what we've done become
unsteady even on a thousand legs
 that cannot break or bend.

CURSE

I have no home to claim.
The wanderer's curse is mine.
There was one name I clung to,
 once, when I had names.
 In every city, I have been
lie bodies left unburied and the dead
forget even that they've died.
 Corpses walk the streets as men.

THE DRAMA WHICH OCCUPIES THE DEAD

*The drama which occupies the dead
occupied the living first. What happened
then
for those before happens to us as well,
and so, originality is always lost, inspiration
spent in its first act,
thru Adam and the garden, or the flood.*

WHEN ANTS MATE

Ants mate on summer nights
in sky, first man to take first woman first
to die.

They fall used up like trash
littering grass afterward,
like black broken glass jewels
with little shattered stained wings.

Women afterwards, mothers
soon to come, crawl into ground, rip
off their wings,

burrow deep and give birth
future backwardly,

graves first and out of them
their children crawl.

How often that play repeated
here with men and women
dressed in human skin, and by morning
light some broken jewels, wings,
others lay within earth bitterly. And what
of the lover waiting by your door?

A ROMAN COIN

A Roman coin dark as a piece of coal
except for few bright gold scars
which reveal half-formed shapes
of a man without a face or
a woman slender as a flower with her
 arms outstretched beside him.

A little drop of metal slips thru
time's bone-slender fingers, a little
drop of metal is left to prove no
matter how insignificant our lives, no
matter how fragile something survives.

CYMERIC

Cymeric closed his eyes to all the sins
of his naked heart and collapsed inside
himself until his eyes were walls
and his flesh bars.

Crumpled upon himself
all his sins escaped from the breathless
mouth and covered his skin like broken
moths trying to find a way into their Eden.

WE SHUT OUR EYES

When we shut eyes everything
fades. Thought of ourselves twist
to another shape because eyes
can never know the inner mind.
World grows strange.
Voices overtake their forms.
Nothing remains, not even voices
we cling to, fragile uncertainty
we are not alone.
Our perceptions are lacking somehow.

Streets are there but they
contract, expand, collapse on us
and fall away from us.
Only sounds remain. They
slip away till we move along a web
which tosses itself thru everything, passing
not from place to place
but unseen memory to unseen
memory. Even for those not blind.

MICTLAN

Ten years to climb thru hell,
thru fire, ten years to climb with one
thought burning in your mind,
past beasts, past frozen cities
where suicides still sing, past all
to reach the edge where the living be,
and at the threshold become
a thing of insect wings, a black
butterfly flitting a green hell of
another skin, of a darker kind.

HER KISS

She is not human, though seems so.
Hands are two spiders working in
rhythmic sync with the other.
Legs are serpents, mouths clutching the
larger beast, pretending to be her torso.
And the larger beast some wolf's
aborted spawn or aquatic slug, glistening.
Her eyes are hard crystalline bits
of coral. But her mouth fills me with
the greatest shame. Her tongue is not a
tongue, it is a segmented parasitic
centipede, its own mouth clicking silently
as she speaks. And she expects me to
kiss her, in mockery or pretense of
being human. Worse, I do, always. It
is a lovely shape she cobbled together,
just as I twisted my own in likeness

of the way she used to be when she was
less beautiful than she is now you see.

SWIMMING

To swim is to fall
forward hoping something
catches you that can't
be human because if it
was human you wouldn't
trust it enough to fall forward
in the first place

and are in the womb
for a moment till you rise back
to the air you forget
what it was in life
that made you as cynical as
you are now. That is the
moment of redemption.

MAPS AND FIRE

We stand upon, within the map
of ourselves. The geography of a day
is known yet only felt.

A day ahead a blank canvas is.
And behind the fires burn. The map
recedes a pace, full
of odd mistakes. We look
backward at the geography of ourselves
and do not recognize what we see.

Only the fire gives shape
our past. The blind fire beckons behind
us, and ahead . . . what will be?

THE POTTED PLANT

Chanced to find a spiderling
in a potted plant one day.
She was so small the thin
leaves which grew
seemed like a wide bridge
for her, so wide four such sisters
could walk abreast

unhindered. I carefully
took her before she starved
with no company to teach
malice of her race, set her outside
amongst uncertain company,
but safer I was sure
than being alone in a world with

boundaries too fine to understand
by anyone who lacks
 a spider's mind.

AT VOID'S END

Screaming defiantly at void's end
the last thought of the last man fell,
last thought, final utterance mend
against oblivion devouring all till hell
herself was emptied even of a sound.
Afterward, no hint of pain was found.
What was it, rage at being denied?
Impotence in death? Acceptance of?
Void did not answer, being unkind,
cannot answer, emptied now utterly of
as hell becomes undreamed of utterly
and the void a sea boundary-less, dying?

THE TZITZIMITL

The skeletal women from the stars
and there is Henry Poole sipping tea,
veteran of the Great War, mentioning
casually to me about them,
 the Tzitzimemeh.

“Singular is Tzitzimitl,” he explains,
looking out upon the ruined ziggurat.
 His pince-nez hides his eyes as

the sun blazes on and the green jade of

the grass seems sharp as an ancient blade.

His suit is pressed, his fingers
broken or diseased; acid he explains. The
war. The wire-backed chair is like a spider

and he is sitting there and the ziggurat is
broken on ahead and he mentions them,
as if he knew them.

“And how do you know so much?” I ask.
“I think my name was Xipe Totec
once,” he
said, looking up, “and she took me away,
and, in punishment gave me these days
I’m living now.”

END TIME

After death supposedly we go to
paradise or hell. They never think
though, not clearly, what such a
thought might mean though.

We are after all infants to
older things. Perhaps in paradise
you’ll find dogs or sparrows or great
leviathans awash in seas of stars.

Or worse. Imagine a dying man
his fear to realize the cancer in his
veins may go to a heaven unaware,

doing what is its nature after
all and therefore not fit
for punishment, while he to hell
goes, cursing his innocent
murderer all the way . . .

BETRAYAL

In that southernmost world to betray
is an art I am told. Sons are expected
to kill their fathers, or fathers their
sons. Marriage is not a contract of lust

but an assassin's limited account to just
one life to take. The only expectation
is to do it well, surprise the canvas
with your art's design, be flawless, be
bold, but above all be kind.

Cruelty lay not in the final strike, it
lay in making yourself so obvious, so
blatant, so grasping without even a
shred of grace it becomes no betrayal

but simply coarse murder in its place.
And the worst betrayal I learn is this,
to willingly go and raise sons and
daughters, marry, and expect no reward
in its place. Betrayed of self to love . . .

Where is my fucking grace!?

RAISED

On some unimportant day all
mankind found all demons, all
angels in embryo.

You'd find
them drifting like milkweed thru
fields, shimmering children
wailing for their
mothers. Well, they
were raised, wing-touched angels
and demons with their horns

and black-jeweled eyes, and now
we've reached the point that
they resemble us,
or we them,
angels murdering children or demons
of the air by the beds of the dying
ones, to comfort

them. They have
become us, made in our likenesses.
As for God? An absent father gifts his
children peace

by putting them in the hands
of better parents than he has been.

BRICK SPARROWS

Small statues on the walls outside
the enclosure, all of sparrows, hardened
bricks flicked away to reveal folded wings.

You'd see them there, at mute attention,
grim little sentinels patrolling their own
private world, a murder in miniature.

Their world collapsed down to ten
thousand feet, a small stream an ocean, a
footfall upon the grass a vast monument like

some god would fashion over ten thousand
years. The mansion itself was still there,
rotting away quietly, an emptied husk.

Maybe the bones of the family are
still there. Beyond the walls of course the
city sleeps, the flesh unraveling their decay.

Only echo of a living thing is them, waiting
silently for the crime that never comes,
grim little things waiting out to prevent
the horror
which already was.

SENSUALIST IN YELLOW

Sensualist in yellow.

New savageries shown.

Nightmare in shadow.

Sensualist in want.

Lingering touches absent.

Heat and shadow.

Passions cooled darkly.

Endless summers spent.

Summer nights blunted.

Sensualist in sorrows.

Cicadas singing, dying.

Soldiers in fields.

Dying the same.

New savageries grown.

Letters perfume decayed.

God is not.

WHAT WE HAVE BECOME

Slowly ravens gained hands.
From wings claws became.
Fingers, jaws lessened, slackened.

Teeth smoothed dully then.
All beasts looked back.
At what they had become.

Ideologies or starving children.
Rookeries of empty cries.
The first true weapon.
Was the mind then.

Thoughts of cities, walls.
Roads became quite bloodied.
Blood stained some trees.

Then insects grew larger.
Gained but stranger properties.
Stranger symmetries,
 savage symmetries.

Feasting on the bones. Of the
dying beasts. Beasts we had been.

Before utterly, terribly
transformed.
Our bodies under metamorphosis.
Changed stranger than ravens.
 Gaining hands and fingertips.
Holding the others' hands.

ISLANDS ON FIRE

Love is another country we could wear.
Your loveliness was something unaware.
I loved your demon eyes and floating hair.
I loved you but you are gone elsewhere.
And islands on fire surround us and devour.
Where do we go when we die: is it fair?
Will I follow after you are gone to there?
I loved you but you are gone elsewhere.
Islands on fire reach with scarlet flowers.
I search for your demon eyes, floating hair.
I loved you but you are gone elsewhere.
And all our love bleeds down into an hour.

WRAITHS

In the beginning, there were wraiths
already inhabiting everything you know.
Before Earth was, they were whose faiths
created us. Before skin of oceans' flow
'cross black continents drowned they stood
and set cities along boundaries of their wraith

eyes and sight, as if all within the hooded
wing of their dominion that damned faith
they carved us. I would it was not so
because we will be as they, wraiths
dreaming a future race, birthing them to
shadows.

TLAHCUILE

Bound to a stone he waited for them
to come, to slaughter him one by one
they fell to him, he slaughtering them.

He watched the ancient sun rise, sun
set, a blazing tear, a bright scarlet eye
staring into him, bloodied tear alone.

He was the last to die.

Imagine that whole continent stilled,
set, a blazing tear, a bright scarlet eye
watching one last child decay, killed,

bleeding his scorn at living so long.
Imagine that whole continent stilled
and he waiting. After the eighth song

sung he fell, singing his blood's sum,
bleeding his scorn at living so long,
looking to death's country for him come.
Bound to a stone he waited for them,
sung he fell, singing his blood's sum.
They fell to him, he slaughtering them.

FOX, A CHILD

A name in a register, a child
buried in a grave unknown
and we are left now upon wild
dark shores of beasts outgrown,
as he or she would have dreamed,
imagine, if in death Fox dreamed.

Dark shores of beasts outgrown
slouch toward the burial awhile,
give silent prayer to where
their births were sown.

A name in a register, a child
though faceless now Fox seemed,
as he or she would have dreamed

and we are left now upon wild
dark rows of names unknown,
unsought, unglimpsed mile on mile
buried in a grave unknown,
till we are as they were, undreamed,
imagined, if in death Fox dreamed.

AT DESCHEN FALLS

I waited there too long at Deschen Falls,
I watched the waters roll downward
to the black decay of those ancient halls
where demons feasted and long after calls
their ancient hunger from walls onward.

Further then, the river now still burning,
all things turning toward the empty sun,
in black distance still she runs, yearning
for the river behind her ever-burning
to race ahead where the sunset's done.

I waited on the cliff all myself alone, my
tears outpouring, I alone thinking once you
had breath but followed down the river
there, passing on this brief way forever,
hoping I would not ever, ever follow you.
But . . . I too fell there at Deschen Falls.

THE BATTLE OF AIN JALUT

I. It is the final battle. Horses are arrayed.
Cannons set. Crude. Unformed. Displayed
as plumes of iron. It is the final battle.
Armies in their thousands watch and wait.
All a hundred years are collected in their wants.
All lives and moments led to this one fate.

Armies stand and make ready to be shattered.
Destroyed. Their miseries so blackly arrayed.
Ain Jalut is burning in thoughts of everyone.
Horses moan and whine and wail like red
daughters out that first Sin's smouldering plume
of a burning hand. It is the final day.

Breath halts before it is conceived. All is still.
Why do we so gladly march obediently to
death's call? To her step? Ain Jalut is burning
in thoughts of its ruin. Then comes command.
Ain Jalut is burning in thoughts of its own
ruin. Then comes at last command. All is still
afterward.

II. Horses were buried here. Other bones.
Upon those hills, some soldiers glanced upward
finally. Seeing what they mistook for stars.
Enthralled seemingly the earth herself falls.
Their steps passed through sand and were lost.
Country was a country of the air whose stones,
whose very colours, the living do not recall.

What was each one's name? None are left to remember now. Only seeds of their actions remain. Each child born. No great tapestry is for them made. Even he whose frail hand. Enclosed a clotted piece of his own mother's blood. Even he whose face we know not of. Soldiers all left upon their hills, gazing to sky.

Creation is held in shadow.

Could I reach out my hand to him? Could I put my finger into a wounded thigh? Could I feel where arrow burned its shaft? His face even I do not know. All their faces are closed in shadow. And of their names? Legions were buried here. It would be the same as the naming of horses. It would be as if finding and naming a colour never before seen.

III. Who are we? Where did we come from?
All children are born on islands of shadow and fire.
Each the seed of a labyrinth unseen as yet.
No oracle deigns to show the path ahead. Some
in knowing this fear the days ahead. Others desire
only the days behind them.

Each epic is a thing after the fact. Each victor is a creature born of clay. A century. A century is needed. After that one might pretend to know. A hundred years ahead perhaps all things are clear. And seen from that vantage point this day is known. But I do not know.

Neath a rose agate-coloured sky some future day unfolds. Some future time when in glancing back some prophet will say our lives were built exactly as she claimed. And having none to dispute her . . . well. It is not as if our lives are equalled theirs. Are not we such foolish things? Are not all the troubling worries of our hearts such simple bland banalities?

IV. It is the final battle. I depart. I could not even give you a stranger's face to view. And when the horses part, their riders and slip a far country, those few survivors, even they will not give witness to those who clasp their bridles with a stranger's hand. Later

scribes will pen and arise their art. Later in temples, the glory will be caught. Later still their words will touch my sight. And I will place this here and leave some fragment of a lesson I was taught. And in some future country, you will grope to find my face.

But it too is left buried at Ain Jalut.

GIFT FOR ELEPHANT

We sit the bone down
 all alone
upon the burial ground
then unfound we
walk on, forgetting sound
 of thunder or lonely
final scream, grown
tusk embedded in drowned

body of her who plunged
to water to deny us, lunged
to river to forget us so we
 are left alone
watching last woman, she
drowned-impaled by bones
of last beast. I then plunge
 to water, he then lunges
 to be free.

TO ALL EDENS

To all Edens swiftly caught, suddenly
unaware, you have nothing to fear
anymore. I have taken each serpent
 to the snake house at the zoo,
and as if you knew I closed the
moon doors too, leaving each serpent
 in another land than yours.

Now the story can never be finished,
Adam is a canvas half undone, Eve
 a hand waiting to grasp its sin,
but they never will you know. Tragedy
has been averted. Forever. *I win.*

Part IV.

Basilisk drowning
in flame

PRODIGAL

Brother asked for his inheritance.
This meant he asked our father to die,
but our father simply gave him his portion
of the inheritance, let him fly.

He'd often send me messages of his time
in greater cities. He'd mock or worse
imply the glories of women. Then
messages stopped; had no reason

to ask why.

Father looked at the road each day;
never stop. Farm faltered time to time
longer he'd looked longingly to the road.
And I took over more and more,

as a loyal son would try.

Of course, he came home.
Father clasped his neck, demanded the
brightest robes for him, ordered a fattened
calf slaughtered, claimed all servants should
bow to him.

Sent a messenger to ask what was happening;
already knew. Hadn't spoken to Father in years,
not since his beloved left to seek fortune
elsewhere. When the
messenger came back I lied.

I said I would not come. At last Father came
to ask why. And I explained.

“All this time I laboured without
complaint, was here for you, served you faithfully
and you show love more for him *you* left than
I who stayed.”

At this he drew himself up proudly and said,
“But he was dead and you are still alive. He is
come home to us, our home preserved for him.”

“And who then preserved this

home for him, if not I? Who tended the fields,
paid the servants their wages, fed cattle and oxen,
who preserved the wisdom of the sages?

And who said to all the servants

gathered here who plied their
trades of hand and eye someday the younger brother
would return and then they'd see how far their
fortunes would fare under his beloved father's guide?

Tell me Father now that we

are here at the turning of the tide after the feast is
ended will your beloved boy tend those fields by
my side? Will he work as hard as I have worked,
will he struggle in vain as I have struggled, or will
you praise his

every step if he but rises in the morning sunrise? Or
will you simply leave him sleeping, praising
his good dreams as better than this life? Go, have
your feast with him, for it's all you'll have,
for I am leaving.”

"You cannot go," he said, panicking slightly.
"Why not?" I asked. "You cannot expect my boy
to do a servant's labour." "Exactly," I replied.
"But every servant deserves their wages. I take
with me those who faithfully serve.
Have your feast for in the morning I am leaving,
with me go those who know *my* just wages."

The feast was held and Father tried his best to
seem a forgiving man. In truth my father always
loved my brother best.

The farm lasted all of fourteen days after the feast.
By then we had left, myself and two-thirds of the
servants loyal to me. Saddest part was
watching my younger brother try and fail,
but still, he tried and tried

to no avail, not because he lacked skill or mind.
No, it was because Father never let him truly try,
knowing there was always an exit by his side. As
for me, I wed, had children of my own.

But sometimes I still cried.

POLYPHEMUS

I. Blinded. Cursed man blinded me.
By shore coarsely cried man took sight
of home. Father heard. God of sea.

Tormentor stood on water,
needed calm water to go home.
Went to my cave. Wept. Tended sheep.
Weeping. Others noticed change, even
father when he came asked how help.

Said wanted to leave.

Blindly walked oceans with father
listening to naiads singing on water,
couldn't see faces
those who sang to me.

II. Once I stood on strange shores and
Father said a great city was here but
now all was dust, bones, teeth broken
on blades. He explained
how gods needed sport from mortals.
This was sport to satiate them.

Asking why could not answer,
only said it needed be done, needed to be.
Why should I worry over them when one
of those brief creatures blinded me?

But by then I had begun to change.

III. I listened carefully, heard harshness
of Father's tone when my nemesis

came close to the shores of home but was
sent back, always by some new terror,
and laughing coarsely at his suffering
I regretted making the vow I made.

IV. Heard naiads singing and wondered
who they were. Standing on a thousand
shores of a thousand lands I
never saw I started to see
the torments of men and women.
And once went to speak to
an oracle, who whispered how I would
regain my full sight, only on that day
my nemesis would come home.
So, I resolved to regain my sight.

V. I went among beasts no worse than I.
I held back the tide of one disaster
or another from taking apart the brief things
who called themselves humanity.
I laboured to build up the walls
of vanished cities, harboured lost
heroes, sheltered them from Hades,
till their affairs were settled finally.

VI. Sometimes Father must have
complained to other children of heaven
but he never spoke to me about my deeds
but only
crept a little
worry in his tone when asking
why I'd changed so radically.

And I explained I wanted to see again,
for the first time. I think maybe he
understood after that.

VII. Finally I stopped Zeus
from taking a woman as his lover
and he threw the thunderbolt to still
my insolence.

It burned a bit I know but for a moment
I saw all, all heaven and earth and
the smallness of the stars and

cursed Zeus and said how small he
was and that he would never
find peace nor hope nor rest
all the days he lived, nor could his fate
be changed, unless I so willed it.

And I died. In Tartarus, I labour
still but I have eye and my nemesis
is home and I have no malice
anymore to him. Even here I
I am able to see more than fate
allows for anyone. If beast I was in life
before the ending of my sight, I be no
beast in hell, though I am no man.

THE LAND OF THE WHITE MARE

The white mare does not seek
to run in her own country
nor has she need to, she
who steps delicately with meek
grace attended to. There in
her country fields are forever
so none can reach the end of her
nor do they try to. It is a thin
hope that we remember those
days the mare was not
a goddess, when she forgot
she was daughter of he whose
name we know not of,
and we ourselves not merely
wingless doves.

THE SUN IS AWAY

The sun is away, haven't you heard?
It is on a personal search I've learned,
looking for the meaning of itself
and until it has the answer
darkness swarms the world.
Where has it gone? Why that's absurd,
it is where it always was, it's simply
turned its back to us till
it has the answer for why it burns.

THE RAVEN AND THE FORGE

The raven has no wing
so, to the forge she goes
to marry the wretched thing
upon her shoulder I suppose.
Many a beast has done
it, the wolf his leg attached,
a bear an eye of copper spun,
the deer his horns he latched.

Men too to the forge they go,
soft and slow, soft and slow
as undreaming sleepers in hours
of repose, but they only birth
flowers, perhaps for some lover,
ah, who knows?

WHO ARE YOU TO A SHADOW

Who are you to a shadow?
Are you anything at all?
Does the shadow perceive you,
 mimicking its steps,
watch as you slant lengthwise
the world? Or does

it not even see you, yourself
too small, a glint in an eye as
alien as an unknown colour?

Of course, each shadow
is but part of the larger whole, an
endless facet of a never-ending jewel,
 the world's night

nothing but a further facet by,
for shadow is upon all worlds
and into the blooded fingers
 of the void, so we too
of course, ourselves a facet of
the whole, bacterium clinging to
 a stone regardless our size,
for all of us are fragments neath
a shadow's gaze yet we are still part
 of a great eternal whole, an
endless menagerie of being each
time we begin our lives with a word
 similar to *I*.

A CANOPIC JAR

A canopic jar on my window sill,
suspended in the sunlight there,
and within like a chrysalis clear
as glass suspended is the heart still
perched upon the edge of its last
beat. I can hear it sometimes, the
way one hears thunder or the sea
waves striking the shore or past
lovers whose voices one can never
forget. So, the jar like the colour
of auburn gold remains always ever
there, for her.

THE FIRE ORCHID

The fire orchid only blooms once a century
you know. She can be found in old tombs
or by ruins where she walked. She's the only
remaining remnant of her kind, last bloom
of a girl turned to flame.
I've heard that when she tires, rests, sleeps
she returns to ashes or to sand. Can't blame
her really for the ruins in her wake. She weeps
fire the way a girl weeps water.
I don't know what she was for
and no one is left to tell us anymore.

THE BLACK RIDER

Out upon the plains endlessly turning
stalks the black rider forever burning,
thirsting to kill her who yearning
for him let ruin slip the unlearning

world. He slows now like shadows
afterward revealed and finally allows
his horse a rest, hears the far bellows
thunder in summer-haunted skies, low,

lonely finally lets sink his head awhile.
He has run forever and now each mile
on mile has grown only into this pile
of this rough patch of ground. Miles

ahead or miles behind she waits for him
regretful, remorseful still and ever, a slim
prayer she wears for him like a second limb
attached her soul, ever reaching out for him.

THE NEVER SHOOK HANDS

They never shook hands, he to she
nor eye to eye reached, she to he,
nor could they speak or would we
listen to their silence only.

Why? Do not ask me, I know no
cause for their behaviour so
I give no answer. I merely go
walking to shadow about she or he.

They died a time ago, buried
mere feet apart the other, carried
by men, women who but tarried
as they put to rest he and she.

In death they never the other saw
as shades would partake, no law
of the common dead applying, saw
them not staring, to either she or he.

He and she, she and he, and we
watching, waiting, but there only
is silence, strangers waiting only
a reason to be more, or to be.

WOMEN AS LANGUAGE

There women as language when
each word spoken as sinew then
is reduced to amber on pages within

cages of ink or speech or
thought . . . don't know when you're
going to be lonely by lonely shores

of bronze etched on
with words parted or gone,
where none of us belong.

There women as language when
cages of ink or speech or
of bronze etched on

each word spoken as sinew then,
thought . . . don't know when you're
with words parted or gone,

reduced to amber on pages within,
to be lonely by lonely shores
where none of us belong.

THE STATUE

Tarnished flesh against steel is cast,
body hardens into a bright, clear glass.

Eyes look on with pity at last.

The eyes softly speak that last dying hour
before flesh became a shower
of glass to make a man immortally devoured.

Muscles tightened, shadow grasping
for daylight,
eyes look on with pity at last
before flesh became a shower,

the eyes softly speak of that last dying hour,
 all implied in a last desperate fight.
Body hardens into a bright, clear glass.

The statue strikes a pose against a night
of glass to make a man immortally devoured.

Tarnished flesh against steel is cast.

THE MALACHITE SUNBIRD

A malachite sunbird blazing
by my windowpane across from a sheet
of watermelon glass, ice stained.

Green and gold the world
beyond where hopes remain.

The plume from off her wing
is a shining green, heard her sing,
know the words to which she
preens her old self by, comforting
delusions her old self had been.

Stoop from off the view of my
world outside, I stop, (how can I not?), the
lingering shadow at my side, hear
young women singing, not one of my
bride. Heard her sing, know

words to which she preens,
green and gold the world beyond
where hopes remain. I stop, (how can I not?),
the lingering shadow at my side. Stoop
from off the view of my world outside

her old self by, comforting
delusions her old self had been
across from a sheet of watermelon
glass ice stained. The plume
from off her wing is a shining

green; hear the young women
singing, not one of them my bride.
There is *still* a malachite sunbird blazing
by my windowpane, ice-stained.

THE COUNTRY OF DUOLICH

The country of Duolich, of which we don't speak of,
is known not to exist on any map because if it did
we would have to know and since we don't speak of
it we know we cannot know. Our country rid
itself of knowledge outside itself you see
in order to be free, in order to believe we are
capable of everything. It is the same as he or she
whose names are rounded up and burnt or the scar
left behind on pretty faces we can't mention ever
unless we want our limbs or our lives dissevered.

The country of Duolich, of which we don't speak of,
supposedly has amber spies who themselves bid
welcome in our country, but we don't speak of
that of course, nor mention their soft music or the grid
of lights which we can see in the distance or when we
hear the sweet sounds of children who are not so far
that we cannot forget what children look like, even she
whose name I cannot say, whose wife bore me. Are
we ever meant to truly forget or close our eyes forever?
When will come the day when Duolich is remembered?

THE BARN OWL

The barn had long ago decayed and now nothing was left except the shadows and the white wing and the small upper hidden places where nests were laid. At times one or the other would rest their heads, pluck some more twigs, or bring a few feathers from another bird's black wing.

The barn of course was never to be rebuilt. Blest

enough I suppose were the pair of them, lest they imagine more could be given them somehow. It wasn't so of course. Whole world was now only forest except for the barn, a few other places, ancient temples or standing stones, or lost traces of footprints on the moon. In oceans down below perhaps was some last lingering trace. I don't know.

The owls would take flight, set their silent races against one animal or another, mice usually, which faces death the way the soldiers had in the last war come.

Then they would return to the barn and become loving parents, tending their broods, dividing the sum of a small dead creature between three mouths and bring back a memory or two perhaps, of a mother cradling a dead infant, as she sings.

A COUNTRY OF THE GLITTERING

A country of the glittering wires
where the fire serpent has no rest
 neath the night of the
 black sun's fires.

Hidden inside the countries of his
 myriad skull
the thorn-bringer child is silenced
 neath the night of the black sun's fires.

Never come morning by valleys
of cedars
those not elect consider it hell,
a country of the glittering wires.

Parade their festivals of fire,
 the turning path,
wounding brilliance then,
 neath the sky of the black sun's fires
a country of the glittering wires.

FEARS?

"Why must you always fear those things?"

said the man folded from a crisp sheet
of newspaper, standing by my window sill
as the rain flashed behind him.

"Why I myself could fear this rain which could dash me to pieces, yet you would only get a cold."

THE SUN BARGE

THE PAPER DOLL

He fell in love with a paper doll,
stating quite solemnly she spoke
to him, of her love for him. Broke
 his mind when she caught fire,
 though I guess he broke before.

Now sees her on walls of buildings,
catches her voice in flight of wings
ravens spend in winter, feeding
 young desires,
paper mouths mouthing words of fire
for him. Eventually, he'll say we are all
paper dolls for his display, we are all
 catching fire or broken pieces of clay.

MARRAGON FAIR

"Have you been to Marragon Fair,
have you seen the ladies there, have
you travelled the forgotten gates,
have you dined on nuts and dates?"

"Yes, good sir to Marragon Fair I have
seen the ladies there, I have travelled the
forgotten gates as I dined on nuts and dates."

RESURRECTION

I had a painting made
of a manticore on my window
sill, and when my sister
resurrected it, though

being a myth it had
never been before, I stroked
its fur, spoke to its woman
face, felt the scorpion
bulb like a flower bleeding black.
Dragons skim air now,

basilisks breathe venom,
mermaids swim in rivers beside
fishermen and all of it seems
normal, everyone else's
memories conforming after the fact.
Someday she might resurrect
leviathans or behemoths,
though she will not birth our
father or our mother. As such to
all others we have always been happy.

RED

There is a world where no fires are.
No rivers of pitch nor molten shores
exist there, nor even a match ignites.
The people there have skin a pure

shimmering red, which changes and
shifts in the light. Inside of them is
the only fire in all the world, just as

blood only exists within veins. One
does not expect blood to flow upward
from the earth any more than they
expect fire. Some, in coming here to

our world have marvelled at what
they have seen, match heads become
as little miniature wombs where they

think children are conceived, and the
great fire mountains erupting forth their
floods the people from their fire-less
world imagine to be where we come from,

because they cannot believe that our
flesh is cold or that our children do not

come from match heads or hearths or
the last long shadows of the pregnant sun.

BLISTER BURN

They see through the eyes
of birds, each child knowing flight
before speech.

In that country of theirs
pyres are always lit, women
and men stepping onto
them, melting in each
other's embrace and out of them
thorns first grow, turning
their bodies into
blackened trees upon which
the children are conceived.
Afterward, they are tended
to, perceiving through eyes
of ravens or crows, their own
mothers and fathers never
spoken of. In that country they
are reared by wings, not fire.

HAWK'S EYE

Black shimmering sphere,
pure hawk's eye,
cancerous strand.

Hard to imagine a stone
killing as it dies. If all
the world was like this
who would be murdered?
All would become a suicide.

COOL DESERTS, COOLER CLIME

1) Cool deserts, cooler clime
and wanderers, their skin azure,
while bone-winged children fly

and dwell in clouds all
purple stained, where sun is not
while bone-winged children fly

caravans roll to no
purpose, all fades
and wanderers, their skin azure,

pray to gods of dust
and bone and wind;
cool deserts, cooler clime.

2) Stained with a purple dye
around their mouths, arcane
secrets whispered now to them,
those veiled women of black
lattice corsets, moaning
secrets whispered now to them

while falls the night
and everything in it
around their mouths, arcane

truths revealed now to them,
those lusting priestesses
stained with a purple dye.

MANASSEH

Under every spreading tree they worshipped
gods they did not know, and Manasseh,
king of Judea wished it so.

His father Hezekiah had a dream
he would die so he prayed to God he
would live. And God replied, “so be it,
some other day you’ll die.”

And in the years Hezekiah was allowed
to live he had a son whom he loved whose
name was Manasseh, but though he had
a righteous father sin was his mother,
and his friend.

And when Hezekiah was gathered
to his people, Manasseh became the new
king, who had not listened to his father.
Manasseh worshipped at Moloch’s
fire and his sons were thrown into the fire.
Manasseh tore the temple down so
people worshipped under every spreading
tree gods they did not know.

Walls were thrown onto the ground,
temples died, no one wept, no one cried
because God also they did not know in those
days Manasseh ruled, in the dead gods’ time.

Then the king of a faraway land took

a hook of bronze and led Judea's king
weeping from his home, with a hook
of bronze through his nose.

In the pit of a dungeon, Manasseh was left
weeping for his home. He was finally alone
with all he had done.

He prayed to every god he knew and
none answered him. He prayed to the devourer
of children and the lady of the pillars and none
answered him.

Finally, he prayed to God he would be released.
He was released. He came home and made
anew Judea, building up walls and temples,
building up the legacy of God in all the people,
trying every day to atone for all he'd done.

Then he died and was gathered to his people,
and afterward under every spreading tree people
worshipped gods they did not know,
people worshipped at Moloch's
fire and sons were thrown into the
fire, and God was still displeased.

AMID THE GRASSES

Amid the grasses, she softly goes,
silent and slow for brave is the earth
though its heart be easily bled,
and new glories shed even in the
flesh of the devoured rose. All was
lost at last, all was lost in the seas
of an emerald time, but swallowed up
in the black maw of time as she softly
goes, and she softly dies.

A LIZARD FELL IN LOVE

I. A lizard fell to Earth and then
fell in love with a woman, and
she with him.

Sitting on verandahs
sipping tea eventually everyone
else forgot his origins and pretended
he looked like everyone.

II. It was just the same when
they returned to his world for
a time, none of them ever noticing
a pale slender form among
the nests, pretending she was scaled
and sapphire-dark, as a final night
came on at last.

AFTER THE POMEGRANATES

Done many abominations
after the pomegranates fell.
Had bred giants prodigious
 after awhile, way one
remembers a dream in
passing through hell.
Giants in turn dreamed us
to being, who birthed them
 in our skulls like
 pomegranates seeds
enlarging outward their
shells and skins, till if one
pierced the outside they'd
 only further walk in.

ICE HAS A TASTE

Ice has a taste of darkness bred
into it. There is a primal shadow
embedded in snow-touched low-
lying fields, by frozen river beds.

Bodies left in snow cannot decay,
red
blood shimmers but so too
does wine. Bodies are wineskins
bled
of their flavour, in red snow.

Ice is dark as fire is, like shed
chrysalises on branches low
lying as hands outstretched. We go.
Ice has a taste of darkness bred
into it. There is a primal shadow . . .

THOSE PROUD CHILDREN

Those proud children of the void,
what do they not know?

We tend to avoid
the dark, they embrace shadow
and in shadow all is known
since the abyss is where we go,
where the dead are
which they own,
bleeding secrets into ether,
overjoyed
at being caught, underpinned
like moths, destroyed.

THE WHITE OXEN

The white oxen of the sun
plow night and bellow rage,
leviathans lumbering sickly
bone-
bright as a skull's
metamorphosis begun.

The night shimmers suffering
so, cage
of our bodies glistening like
stone.

Plow the night and bellow rage,
the white oxen of the sun.

Leviathans lumbering sickly,
bone-
dark and grey, slouch or run
into the Assyrian twilight age.

The white oxen of the
sun
still plow the night and
bellow rage.

BETRAY

I love you more than words can say,
So, I suppose I should stop my words
 but if I stop, will it betray
my bold attempt, the way a bird
thrown from her nest must
 fly or fall, perish or flourish?

Absurd

I know to keep speaking so, say
I love you . . . but the only word
left I can think of now is . . . betray.

A NEST OF BIRDS

The man has a nest of birds
in him. His chest is hollow
and there is the sound of birds
scratching wings neath
 the shallow
skin. In his country is
it always so he explains to me,
 entire shadow
ecologies, hidden jaguars
 missed
behind hedges of once-singing
grasses
 or words
hidden behind other,
 less alien words.

THE INVISIBLE ECOLOGY OF SELF

A clear-minded shape of man,
hard as marble is, or glass,
translucent as a crucifix
 held aloft in amber
 or a martyr to his
master act. But deep within
the beasts they growl, anger
 is a serpent now,
blooded and dark as a nighted
sun in a moonstone sky,
 and beside his anger lie
his grief, transparently see
thru his glass skin, sharp-shaped
mother of a fire weeping of itself,
or a lizard each shed of skin.

 And beneath, further
beneath what else is there?
He is invisible but so he thinks
his inner ecology is,
 but nothing of him can
 I see except his anger,
his grief, his many haunted
jealousy so like a lapis bird,
perched in his transparent skull,
 forever watching me.

THE TIGER

On my shelf, on my mahogany table
rests a tiger, iron maybe, maybe
iron or burnished bronze. If I were able
I'd describe the beast's claws, the
anguished look of he, or she.

I'll try anyway, the best that I can.
Back is curved, the muscles are tense,
jaws opened, hint of teeth, then
we come to legs outstretched, sense
of strength in the beast's existence.

The tail is hinted at, along the back
leg, sprawled against the tarnished skin.
The ears are back, pinned, attack
implied in each movement. No sin
is ever quite so utterly pure, no sin

as the hunt, as the claws finally peeled
back. It seems it was but the part to
some rough set, half a scene gone, revealed
only by the beast itself, and so
I place my limited understanding here, do

all I can to speak of this rough beast.
And why? Because soon I am gone from
everything and only my words a feast
become for others to partake of, sum
of thought displaced here. I come

to death's door and pass over it the
same, like the prey of some blunt animal
in a black jungle. Perhaps she
or he is my future then. And shall

I avoid my fate? Fate is all I have, is all . . .
I never was the same.

MITHRA'S DAY

At the festival of souls Mithra
was born whose blackened eyes

I knew before
she who let the sun slip from
her fingertips
against my lips
in a burning haze as a devil
asked her secret name and
we were caught on a burning plain
in the midst of night no more.

AN ICE MERCHANT

We make a divinity of all things
after the fact.

An ice merchant
waiting out the sea to throw
back his vessel to him,
to then carry the crystalline
decay, making his fortune on the
way, till the thought of ice
sustains a summer's
day. In another hundred years
some might mistake our lives
too fragile in their beauty,
as if all were ice cast upon an
island of wildfire in a blazing sea.

MIDNIGHT ON THE DESERT

I was running behind by the black roads running
west, and the storm had left my skin at last I knew.
My eyes were clear and the desert burning
went ticking past like clocks tick or those few
little insects one can't find here. And then I was
stopped and before me suddenly daylight spurning
black there stood a creature before my path. Was
it a creature? I could not tell. We stopped. Nothing
was said exactly but I felt it speaking that it could
not understand why the thing I was was here. Turning
this over in my mind I wondered too and asked could
it be, instead, she should not be here.

She mentioned broad cities of bright amber
in the distance, bright cities I could not see.
I mentioned I had roads ahead to reach. Her

speech slowed then as if centuries in recall. Were
we certain we were who we seemed? Were we?
She mentioned broad cities of bright amber.
I mentioned behind me the cities I could see.

Midnight slowed. Darkness peeled away. Here
we stayed talking, beast and I, or I a beast she
perceived as such. Finally, we went our ways, we . . .

She mentioned broad cities of bright amber
in the distance, bright cities I could not see.
I mentioned I had roads ahead to reach. Her

voice lingered and went on across the desert.
I suppose my voice alone for her remained.
And then the storm bled back within awhile.
To my sure shame, it seemed.

QUICK TO THE PLUNDER

Quick to the plunder, swift
to the spoil, for blood is the plunder
and none swifter than
Death when summoned
by shadows thirsting for sunlight,
when summoned by sunlight
thirsting for death.

Quick to the plunder
of Branwen's children, swift
to the spoils of a king's
mad regret. Come to the fields
where sons are laid waste,
come where shadows, like
dogs, lick blood from men's hands,
and sunlight, like ravens,
feast on the slain.

BORN IN FIRE

I was born in fire, birthed in flames,
fed on black shadows and proud,
dark days, until,
from my chrysalis
I emerged unscathed, into the blinding
white, the endless light,
the pathless way.

IAELLA'S WINTER

And you were so dark as Iaella's
winter, each glance
scathing, each sigh perverse.
You were like some jewelled blade;
precious, but to hold you
 too close was fatal.

THE HAWK

the winds were so cold last night
numbing burning eating away
he died out on the cold out on the wing
 swooping down lower to painful cold
thought he'd spend the night out on
 the snow plains frozen death painful

i do not know if he cried or screamed
but he died and i buried him deep in the woods
 where no one will find him after the
next snow falls he died a death i would not want
my enemies to suffer out on the plains frozen

KZYL-ORDA

At Kzyl-Orda our songs are burned black,
flesh woven into the very words.
And those songs take up
their lyres of wind
 to birth new songs,
which, like spirits of the air,
arrive fresh-born within our minds.

THE PLAGUE YEARS

The world is getting slower
all the time. An ocean is something
to be stepped across. A city something
 to occupy an hour in redressing.
I remember when lightning was our
movement and a city but a still frame
caught and discarded.

Now I must wait. Now a city
is something slow and small, an hour
something hard like glass suspended
in sand, not pouring away but
 grinding at our sight.

Always a fear about diseases
coming to claim us, to take us to
another, darker shore. How many years
have been a day? How many centuries
condensed a season? You hear

the terror of dying in absentia,
waiting for the plague years to start so
they may stop. Instead, everyone is
holding breath, trying to still this
ending, to keep it all from happening, shutting
down the world to keep the world contained.

What is death? Death is the absence
of speed. Each moment held waiting is
a death, each day held suspended in amber
is a funeral. A year can seem a day in love.

A day can seem forever when
tomorrow never comes.

THE PAGES ARE LYING

The pages are lying on my desk.
Pages of the epics I have not written.
I shall not come this way again.
We are all undone. By a single act.
No story is finished. By its own
conclusion. No story ends seamless
as a wound now closed.

All the things we've done. Are
finite. All the things undone.
Infinite. And if I could listen to
each song unsung. It
would be longer than
each that is done. So even as I
conclude myself. And I am in this
moment that I am. Even as I end
my words. My
words unsaid they never end.

GINGER CAT AND THE CANDY GIRL

The ginger cat and the candy girl came to the autumn bone town from the ghost train as it whistled along, without ever making a sound. And there on a far-field was an old scarecrow

with rags for eyes and flesh, scarlet or brown, and the town was nestled by dry canals, and the buildings were twig-thin and fine, and no one was there, nor even a lone child's sigh.

The cat was curled about her shoulders, and she in summer dress unaccustomed to the scene seemed like golden scales all coalesced together, into the likeness of a girl, smiling

the way rain smiles, to any who have seen the rain. But no rain came there, and the scarecrow said nothing, nor the cat curled like toffee about the child, nor the child herself,

who only stood awhile and waited, and listened and was still. And then in a flash the train returned, she boarded from the station, or the echo of the station, and they passed thru

hills lit of gasoline, or the memories of gasoline, were the whole world burnt and was silent and still afterward, when no voice came, nor life, nor flesh, nor remember, but the

shadow of the scarecrow on the hill. And no bird sang, save as ghosts caught by the ginger cat, laughing in the moment as the moment came and went, without a name.

EAST OF JESUS NOWHERE

Sometimes, along the shore
we used to run into the water as far as legs could carry,
plunge deep into the river and darkly rolling tide,
play tag and pirates, looked at clouds, and wondered
why they worked their way like caterpillars across
the sky. And then we grew up, into our appointed lives.

I'd spent the day working with the white sheets,
in my office on the main street. And every day
the tender cruelties and the tides of words would
wash over me as if I were a stone that needed smoothing.
And I would work doubly hard, until my fingers
wore to stubs, and my eyes glassed over once or twice.

She would work in a law office across the street,
where the men had too much whiskey on their breath,
and the perfume of women past their prime
on their sleeves. And she heard every day about those
women, between conversations about girlfriends and wives,
women who still sold sex along the rivers of the street,
and would call any man daddy if the price was right.

And I stood up one day, and looked at all I was,
at all I had ever been, and cried.
The white sheets were folded in their cubicles,
laughing, and the walls closed out the sky,
until the world dwindled into nothing, except
prisons in the mind. And I walked away
into the night blue air, while the winds played
their symphonies, until I stood beside her

in her lonely room. I sat by her, bent down,
upon the floor, balled my hands into fists,
and rubbed them against my eyes.

She did not speak, but bent beside me,
and we spent the night alone, neither thinking
nor talking, as the rooms closed one by one,
and the steel doors sealed around us,
until the world crunched down to a smaller
size, and all the dreams and thoughts we
had known since childhood echoed away,
caught in the wind's symphony beyond the walls.
And I remembered every lie spoken to me,
all the twisted truths that grew inside men's souls,
all the wars, the lusts, the crimes. I could not even speak
against the sinners in their lives. Then we rose,
awakening as if from a dream, into day and light and sorrow,
death, and our appointed lives.

ANOTHER OCEAN

Old writers would mention a conceit.
They'd say in the waters was everything
on land, a corresponding creature.
So, one might imagine elephants or
sparrows under ocean, which is absurd
of course. Eventually, the idea fell away.

But more frightening would be if everything
in the ocean corresponded with something
on land. Could you imagine the deep
leviathans below only to realize such
a thing existed with us now, invisible and
terrible, covered by ammonite coils,

watching us, ever watching us, imagining
us small crippled invertebrate cowards
scrawling along the floor of an ocean while
it strides over us, devouring at its will?

THE MONOLITH

I. Beyond the ebony river of the Voienar
and the acid seas of the Anderan in that
country of midnight suns, that place of
barren lands the Monolith, a titan of the

ethered skies rose up to heavens of
angels's height, like an onyx raven of
shadowed realms and the gardens of the
night, travelling across the bleakened lands

of steel as vaultless spires of iron arose
in some vain attempt to touch the sun like
the greying roses of paradise or the leviathan
of the neptuned sea, while the Monolith

sailed on, it the last and final ship of heaven.
It was forged in the fires of the Tyxemian peaks,
the lava oceans of silvered glass, a blackened
wanderer upon the seas of the emerald sun

striding out upon the fortraned wings of the
dawn, sailing beneath the golden crimsoned
morn, its cry resounding through a million
lands as the Monolith soared in endless

flight from the height of the Heaven's sand
and stars. Then it fell to the phoenix plains
of Eden's fair rebirth out above the Ksadis
reeds where the sleeping Thsui dwell and
streams of ivory milk do flow. Trekking from

the wasted mountains to this gentle sheltered place, where floating on the tranquil perfumed breeze butterflies of mosaic hue and the

size of Shialian cities, their wings a golden cloak vast as the lakes of Larnark, descending to the azure flowers upon the Eden floor drinking of the wine a ruby dye, unaware

of the silent visitor passing through as a shadow in the night, an all-seeing watcher from the skies right into the valleys of the Nile and the mortals land in Dorovar.

From the floor of Eden the Monolith came, pausing but a moment above the lush savanna's grass beyond those phoenix plains, gazing on as the Melicors with manes

a stain of red hunt out amongst the ziggurats and devour hapless prey with fangs of steel, their claws a glimpse of sunlit death as they rip the hinds to blood, unaware that

they were likewise being hunted by the Thynn, those crystal spiders a hue of topaz stone, their legs the length of Renalian towers of frozen glass, stalking beneath the gates of

the sun to kill the winged beasts of Jiadic's realm, racing phantoms upon the veldts in flights of death, as they catch the Melicors

in talons of diamond and topaz stone.

So, on the Monolith did go, uncaring of the conquerors' demise, continuing on to Dorovar and the Turtle Nile beneath the moons of blood, like an explorer amongst the countries of the

unknown, or a child with the awe of a mortal man, sailing past walls of poignant earth where only the fiery dragon clouds watched this invader's march, as they lazily trod the ivory

realm gazing past the heavens silent as the sun's departure from the varied lands of Zana'an. Then the Monolith rode the ancient winds beneath the port of Syhar beyond the

peaks of Kran, a sprawling citadel of endless height, and upon the topmost spire overlooking a thousand lands the Lady Ryenil did stand in robes of darkest purple night, aware of

the titan's arrival upon her kingdom's scape, alone but for the quiet stars as she watched the onyx raven coming on gothic wings of ether, weeping for this was a sign of her

mortality yet she was centuries in age and fell to the marble floor for nothing more would be the same. So, on the Monolith sailed in sight of the city's inhabitants

as it flew above the Turtle Nile to the
Caldanian isles of Rumath, uncaring of the
threat it held to all mankind for it was a
stranger in mortal lands beneath the cries

of heaven, where stood the city-states of
Verras in the grip of madness and renaissance
with the seas of change reshaping its fair face.
The Monolith came upon Rumath, isles

of greying steel and stone, their inhabitants
a race of Elfin sages, their cities formed of the
scholar's hand, watching the Monolith
ride upon the silken breeze, startled by

its presence and relieved as it left for the
raven was seeking something near the heart
of this shifting vale, near the heart of the
Nile. To Allantis it approached, passing

merchant caravans and herdsmen with their
animals, peaks of steel and glass. To Allantis
it came and descended to the plains, resting
before humanity as an enigma for mankind.

II. They came upon it as insects upon the
boulder's scape, trying to assault the
heaven's reaching arm yet could not
cling upon those fortraned wings of

the dawn nor enter into the Monolith,
seeking to answer what it was for it was

alien to all mankind, all but one. She hurried from the port of Syhar rushing

to the ships of lanthan design, sailing down the Turtle Nile as a speeding arrow of silvered light. To Allanis she came beyond the isles of Rumath, to Allanis and the

Monolith for her fate was intertwined with that wanderer upon the plains, the Lady Ryenil was locked to the wanderer of Tyxemia and she could not escape it.

She stood upon the plains beside the onyx raven and touched its iron hide. A door opened as she alone entered and it sealed again, before the view of Allanis' great race,

appalled and amazed at what went on. She strode across the corridors of sunlit steel, frightened but still she went and sat upon the onyx throne at the heart of the final

ship of heaven as it rose up, ascending from the plain onto a prize greater than the mortals' maddest dream, onto the City of the Stairs beyond the heaven's reach where all of Ryenil's

people, the Star Keepers, waited for her to come home again in the heart of the Monolith once more. Yet this was the last time she would leave her dwelling place amongst the suns,

this was the last time she would rule her city
as her own. To the City of the Stairs she came,
a monolithic realm beyond man's conceiving
where the Star Keepers waited, where she

departed from the ship and stood in the midst
of them all again, but one immortal amongst
infinity's canvas, while the Monolith departed
back to its home and the peaks of Tyxemia,
beyond Voiendar and Anderan.